

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 20207

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR EG IS US XF
SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR CAMP DAVID AS SEEN BY EGYPTIAN
- FOREIGN OFFICE PARTICIPANTS

1. TWO MEMBERS OF EGYPT'S DELEGATION TO CAMP DAVID SUMMIT, AMBASSADORS AHMED MAHER AND NABIL ELARABY, ON AUGUST 31 SHARED WITH US THEIR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FORTH-COMING NEGOTIATIONS. LITTLE THAT THEY SAID WAS NEW. WE REPORT THEIR VIEWS BECAUSE THEY REFLECT THOSE HELD BY THE OTHER EGYPTIAN PARTICIPANTS AND, SO FAR AS WE CAN TELL, BY MOST EDUCATED EGYPTIANS.

2. MAHER SAID EGYPT ATTACHES THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE TO THE CAMP DAVID TALKS. SADAT WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO MAKE THEM SUCCEED, FOR HIS PEACE INITIATIVE RESTS ON THEIR OUTCOME. A DEADLOCK WOULD MEAN THE EFFECTIVE END OF SADAT'S PRESENT COURSE. PRESUMABLY IN THE EVENT OF AN IMPASSE THE U.S. WOULD SPELL OUT ITS OWN PROPOSALS, THUS PUTTING THE ONUS FOR FAILURE ON ISRAEL. THIS WOULD SALVE EGYPTIAN FEELINGS--INDEED WOULD BE ESSENTIAL FOR FUTURE U.S./EGYPTIAN RELATIONS-- BUT IT WOULD DO NOTHING TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE. MAHER SAID HE KNEW OF NO RESPONSIBLE EGYPTIAN
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WHO HOPED CAMP DAVID'S OUTCOME WOULD BE TO ISOLATE ISRAEL RATHER THAN TO ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK FOR MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS. AT THE SAME TIME, EGYPT SIMPLY COULD NOT ACCEPT AN OUTCOME IN WHICH ISRAEL DID NOT MOVE ON THE KEY ISSUES--PARTICULARLY WEST BANK WITHDRAWAL--WHILE THE U.S. CALLED FOR CONTINUING NEGOTIATIONS.

3. MAHER SAID HE HAD NO CONFIDENCE THAT ISRAEL WAS EQUALLY SERIOUS ABOUT ACHIEVING A BREAKTHROUGH AT CAMP DAVID. BEGIN'S INFLEXIBLE STATEMENTS ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT POLICY DEMONSTRATED THAT ISRAEL WAS NOT ONLY COMING TO THE SUMMIT WITH NOTHING NEW, BUT WAS TRYING TO POISON THE ATMOSPHERE IN ADVANCE. IN CONTRAST, THE ABSENCE OF POLICY STATEMENTS BY SADAT AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS WAS A SIGN THAT EGYPT CONSIDERED CAMP DAVID TOO SERIOUS FOR POSTURING OR PROPAGANDA.

4. MAHER SAID THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAD GREAT CONFIDENCE IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S SERIOUSNESS AND DETERMINATION TO SEE THE NEGOTIATIONS THROUGH TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. THE AIRCRAFT DEAL, THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY AND THE LIFTING OF THE TURKISH ARMS EMBARGO WERE ALL EXAMPLES OF THE PRESIDENT'S STAYING POWER WHEN HE WAS INTELLECTUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY COMMITTED TO A FOREIGN POLICY COURSE OF ACTION. THESE ACTIONS DEMONSTRATED THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD PERSEVERE IN WHAT HE BELIEVED TO BE RIGHT, WHATEVER THE DOMESTIC CONSEQUENCES. EGYPTIANS HAD ALSO BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE PRESIDENT'S FORTHRIGHT POLICY STATEMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST, PARTICULARLY THOSE RELATING TO A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND AND THE RIGHT OF PALESTINIANS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DETERMINATION OF THEIR FUTURE.

5. MAHER CONTINUED THAT EGYPT RECOGNIZES AND RESPECTS THE U.S. POSITION THAT, TO BE EFFECTIVE, AMERICAN
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PROPOSALS MUST BE PUT FORWARD IN THE CONTEXT OF A NEGOTIATING SITUATION. HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE U.S. WILL IN FACT COME FORWARD WITH PROPOSALS THAT ARE BASED ON ITS STATED POSITIONS ON THE KEY ISSUES OF A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. THE SOONER THAT WAS DONE, MAHER COMMENTED, THE SOONER CAMP DAVID WOULD COME TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION.

6. IN A CONSIDERABLY BRIEFER CONVERSATION, AMBASSADOR ELARABY MADE SOME OF THE SAME POINTS, BUT REFLECTED A SOMEWHAT MORE PESSIMISTIC ATTITUDE. HE STRESSED THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAD BEEN "VERY MUCH ALARMED" AT BEGIN'S RECENT STATEMENTS AND WERE FEARFUL THAT THEY SHOWED ISRAEL HAD NO INTENTION OF MAKING CAMP DAVID A SUCCESS. ELARABY SAID THAT THE FOREIGN OFFICE PARTICIPANTS AT CAMP DAVID HAD SPENT THE LAST FEW DAYS PUTTING TOGETHER AN OPTIONS PAPER FOR SADAT. THE PAPER CONTAINED BOTH POSITIVE COURSES OF ACTION THAT EGYPT MIGHT PURSUE AS WELL AS POSITIONS THAT MIGHT BE TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO ISRAELI PROPOSALS. ELARABY SAID HE HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING WHICH OPTIONS IN EITHER CATEGORY PRESIDENT SADAT WOULD DECIDE TO PURSUE.

MATTHEWS

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